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## Farmers honour ACTESA



President Banda with Dr. Muyunda

The Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA) has been awarded the Farmer's Award in recognition of the expertise and support that the Agency is providing to the commodity sector in eastern and southern Africa.

ACTESA CEO, Dr. Cris Muyunda, received the award from President Rupiah Banda during the 105th Zambia National Farmers' Union (ZNFU) Congress at Mulungushi International Conference Centre in Lusaka, Zambia on October 7, 2010.

Other regional officials recognised at the Congress were Dr. Hans Balyamujura of ABSA and Mr. Hupert Jarlett of AFGRI.

## USAID team visits ACTESA

A United States Agency for International Development (USAID) East Africa team on October 5, 2010, visited the ACTESA Secretariat to introduce the new Director for Regional Economic Growth and Integration, Kurt Low and to discuss further collaboration with ACTESA.

Also in the group were, Regional Agricultural Advisor, Dr. Peter Ewell, Regional Trade Advisor, Ms. Stephanie Wilcock, Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary Advisor, Mr. Jeffery Austin, Regional Trade Policy Specialist, Mr. Mwanja Nzuki and Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist, Mr. Walter Ong'eng'a. Also present was COMESA USAID Programme Coordinator, Mr. Walter Talma.



Kurt Low

ACTESA CEO, Cris Muyunda and ACTESA staff received the USAID team and briefed them on ACTESA's programmes and progress in the region. He also mentioned how ACTESA is getting support from the private sector who, were becoming more interested in doing business in the region's agricultural sector.

Mr. Low said ACTESA was right on target with the priorities of US President Barack Obama's administration, which had introduced the first Global Development Policy, with a focus on economic growth.

"Congratulations, from what I can see, there is an enormous amount of progress made by ACTESA," he said

## ACTESA CEO calls for prioritizing of agriculture

ACTESA CEO, Cris Muyunda has called on African Governments to prioritise agriculture if the continent is to prosper.

Dr. Muyunda said this at the just ended Agri-business Forum 2010 organised by EMRC in Kampala, Uganda. The forum was officially launched by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Uganda, Hon Alhaji Kirunda Kivejinja. He was joined by the Prime Minister of Chad, H.E Emmanuel Nadingar and the Hon. Hope Mwesigye, Minister of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries of Uganda.

In his address to the over 400 delegates representing over 41 nations, during the opening of the technical session, Dr. Muyunda said agricultural development was very crucial so as to take advantage of the vast market opportunities that exist in the African region.

Earlier, Dr. Muyunda told the meeting that though issues of finance were critical to the development of agriculture, there was need to open up the markets in the region.

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“As ACTESA, we bring the assurance that we have a big regional market for agricultural products but they must be open first before we talk about finance,” he said. “It is crucial that Governments through CAADP, prioritise agriculture. Agriculture is the only way forward, it must be supported.”

Dr. Muyunda suggested that a high level meeting of African leaders on agricultural finance be held to give specific directions beyond the 10% to be allocated to agriculture under the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) agenda.

The Agri-business Forum plenary sessions focused on the global demand for food and food security through commercialisation beginning with a call to all the representing nation's private sectors to upgrade the issue of food security.

The presenters stressed that agriculture is one of the most important sectors of Africa's economy where on average an important 70% of the population across all African nations depend on agriculture for their livelihood.

## *ACTESA undertakes national consultations on draft Biosafety guidelines*

In line with the directives of the COMESA Ministers of Agriculture, ACTESA has commenced implementation of national consultations on draft regional Biosafety guidelines among member States.

The consultations were prompted by a decision of the third meeting of the Joint COMESA Ministers of Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources during their annual meeting in July 2010, in Lusaka, Zambia.

The first rounds of the consultations were held in Uganda [September 3], Ethiopia [September 16] and Rwanda [September 21-22].

Dr. Getachew Belay, Senior Biotechnology Policy Advisor at ACTESA noted that the regional harmonization process aims to share information, resources and expertise for cost-effectiveness in capacity building and drawing synergies to avoid redundancies.

According to Dr. Belay, the support for a regional approach in



Workshop participants, Uganda

the three countries was unequivocal and the feedback obtained from the national consultations critical to improve the draft guidelines.

Bio-safety Focal points in each of the countries led the discussions on the draft policies and guidelines.

In Uganda, Dr. Okasaai Opolot delivered the official opening speech on behalf of the Ugandan Minister of State for Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, Hon. Bagiere Henry.

He stressed the importance of balance in discussing the guidelines saying, “I believe there are a whole lot of grey areas in knowledge and views for the technology to be used safely and responsibly.”

In Ethiopia, Mr. Belete Geda of the Ethiopian Environmental Protection Agency welcomed the regional approach “as long as it was aligned with the national Bio-safety laws”.

And in Rwanda, Ms. Carolina Kayonga, Rwandan Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Environment and Lands, applauded the regional approach while acknowledging that COMESA Countries were at different stages in biotechnology application and could not isolate themselves from their neighbours.

“It is obvious that bio-safety issues transcend our national boundaries and that is where our collective and harmonized action is required if we have to make use of biotechnology in a safe way,” she said.

The guidelines on commercial planting, trade and access to emergency food aid were developed under the Regional Approach to Biotechnology and Biosafety Policy in Eastern and Southern Africa (RABESA) project, initiated by COMESA Ministers of Agriculture in cognizance of the importance of regional cooperation in Bio-safety matters.

The consultations will continue in all COMESA member States.